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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ISRAEL'S TARGETED ASSASSINATIONS, PALESTINIAN "SELF DEFENSE," U.S. HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND DEMOCRACY, GUANTANAMO SUICIDES

¶1. SUMMARY: Daily newspaper "Oman" condemns Israel's targeted assassinations and questions U.S. motives for humanitarian intervention, "Al-Watan" supports Palestinian "self defense." Gadfly columnist Essa al-Zedjali of "The Times" calls democracy a guise for U.S. interests. Limited coverage of Iran and Zarqawi's death continues. Al-Sablah Internet discussion blames U.S. for Guantanamo suicides. END SUMMARY.

COVERAGE

¶1.1. Coverage of Iran abated this week, migrating off the front page in Omani dailies. The "Times of Oman" ran two articles about Iran on its opinion page, the first an AFP analysis by Michael Adler and the second an editorial from Pakistan's "Dawn" newspaper blaming U.S. "unilateralism" for the standoff with Iran. Limited continuing coverage of the death of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi mentioned allegations that beating by U.S. troops hastened his end.

BLOCK QUOTES: ISRAEL ASSASSINATES...

¶1.2. In June 11, government-owned daily "Oman" (circ. 38,000) published an editorial entitled "The Israeli Escalation to Confuse the Palestinians":

"Palestinians are seeking consensus about how best to deal with worsening problems and how to reconcile Fatah and Hamas. It is no coincidence that Israel is trying to escalate the situation by assassinating leaders and randomly bombing areas populated mostly by women and children. Israel is trying to stack the cards to create the greatest chaos possible in the Palestinian territories, hoping to sow serious discord between Palestinians. The pressing question is whether the Palestinians will overcome these trials."

...PALESTINIANS RETALIATE

¶1.3. The privately owned Arabic daily "al-Watan" (circ. 42,000), assailed American "support" for Israel's policy of assassination in Palestine in a June 11 editorial, "New Chapters in an Old Play":

"Every time Israel kills Palestinian women and children as in the massacre on Friday, Washington announces in the U.N. Security Council that Israel's actions are "self defense." Only murderers and war criminals consider slaughtering civilians to be "self defense." Palestinian retaliation should not be considered terrorism. It is a legitimate right of self defense."

SKEPTICISM OVER U.S. HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

¶1.4. On June 10, "Oman" carried an editorial by Suhail Bin Salim al-Khathiri entitled "The International Community and Humanitarian Intervention":

"Terms like humanitarian intervention and international community pervade the media and international circles whenever America takes part in an international conflict. These terms are exaggerated and fabricated to give the impression that a dangerous threat to humanity and the international community exists, and that something should be done. Americans then rise to defend the rights and democracy principles of others, claiming that these are universal, and that they are justified in crossing all international laws, resolutions, and bodies to wage war against the 'aggressor.' This happened with NATO's attack against Yugoslavia under the guise of ending genocide, which resulted in that country's disintegration. This process

culminated in the war on Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States invaded Iraq, and its armed forces violated Iraqis' most basic human rights. Thus, using the terms [mentioned above] to control other peoples or promote a nation's self interest means that these terms are no longer legitimate."

...AND CYNICISM ABOUT U.S. CALLS FOR DEMOCRACY

15. On June 11, the English-language daily "Times of Oman" (circ. 25,000) acerbic editor-in-chief/columnist Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali bylined a front-page editorial, "US Democracy Protects Only US Interests":

"Democracy is of paramount importance as long as it fosters American interests. But the moment it happens to go against the US interests, democracy and all principles stemming from it are thrown to the winds and naked power dominates the scene. True democracy entails respect for the opinion of others and commitment to international laws... The US principle runs like this: the world has to commit to the kind of democracy which the US administration desires, a democracy which would see with American eyes and think with American minds to receive the blessings of the U.S. administration. But when the US interests are at risk, the administration bares its fangs, unveils its real face, and of course, doesn't care a fig about democracy."

ONLINE: GUANTANAMO - "THE AMERICANS KILLED THEM"

15. Reports of suicides at Guantanamo generated strong reaction but limited interaction on "Al-Sablah," Oman's most popular Internet discussion forum, with 1,586 hits and 61 responses. A strong majority of posters (56) blamed the U.S. for the detainees' demise: "these people sold their lives in this world for heaven, so it was impossible that they would have committed suicide. The Americans killed them." The few dissenters insisted that Guantanamo detainees are in fact terrorists. They blamed Osama bin Laden for detainees' imprisonment, calling him the "Rat of Tora Bora."

STEWART